KAZAK SOCIAL STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

IN this paper I have attempted to explain the nature of certain features of Turco-Mongol social structure by an examination of some of the processes which appear to have been active in their development. The study is based on information gathered during field work among the Kazak from July to October 1936.[1] Most of the material, unless otherwise indicated, relates to the middle of the nineteenth century, to the period immediately preceding the Russian conquest of Central Asia.

The Kazak,[2] frequently referred to in the older ethnographic literature as Kirghiz, were until very recently a nomadic stock breeding people but are now rapidly adopting a sedentary life. They inhabit the steppe country between, roughly, the Caspian Sea and the Altai Mountains and number, according to the census of 1926, 3,959,000. Traditionally they were divided into three "hordes" or ordas: the Great Orda in the east and the Little Orda in the west, with the Middle Orda between them. They speak a Turkic language which is classed by Deny[3] with Kirghiz and Bashkir as a "western dialect." The Kazak are definitely Mongoloid in physical appearance with evidence of considerable Caucasoid admixture among the southern and western groups. Basic Kazak culture, which has been summarized by Murdock[4] is closely related in nearly every aspect with that of the Kirghiz, Turcoman, Kalmyk, and Mongols. Historically the Kazak can be first dated as a distinct people in 1465[5] although the names of some of their constituent groups may be traced much farther back.[6] They were gradually conquered by the Russians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and now form a republic of the Soviet Union.

Although the literature on the Kazak is large the details of their social organization have remained obscure. They are usually described as divided into a large number of tribes, subtribes, gentes and "branches" whose structure, function and relation to one another are not clear. In this study I have sought to define the nature of Kazak social groupings, the process of their origin and their relation to economic life, marriage and the family, class stratification, and political administration.

[1] Field work was made possible financially by a University Fellowship from the Yale Graduate School and a grant from the Institute of Human Relations of Yale University.

[2] The present official Russian form of the name, transliterated, is Kazakh. This was adopted in order to avoid confusion with Cossack, which is also Kazak in Russian. In Kazak orthography the name is Qazaq but I have used the more familiar form.

[3] Deny, *Les Langues turques*, 202.

[4] Murdock, *Our Primitive Contemporaries*, 135-62.

[5] Muhammad Haidar, *The Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 82.

[6] Kuftin, *Kirgiz-Kazaki*, 8.

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127 Rashid-ad-Din was the vizier of Ghazan Khan of the Mongol dynasty in Persia. His
114 work, written between 1298 and 1307 at the commission of his sovereign, contains in addition to an extensive history very valuable accounts of the Mongol and Turkish tribes living in Central Asia in the days of Chingis. I have used the Russian translation by Berezin[23] because the French translation of Blochet[24] unfortunately does not include the section describing the nomad tribes.

Extensive commentaries on these and other oriental sources have been made by Bartold[25] and Bretschneider.[26]

I have also used the accounts of the early European travellers through Central Asia: Marco Polo,[27] Carpini and Rubruck.[28]

104 Kazak words were recorded in the orthography adopted in 1929. This orthography is based on the Latin alphabet with the addition of a few symbols for sounds not readily expressed by Latin characters. Approximate equivalents in English are as follows:

a	as in *father*
b	similar to English *b*
c	as English *sh*
ç	as *z* in *azure* (similar to French *j*)
d	similar to English *d*
e	as in *let*
ə	as the *a* in *at*
g	as in *get*
ɣ	(a velar g; no Engish equivalent)
h	similar to English *h*. (It occurs only in foreign loan words.)
i	as in *bit*
j	as *y* in *yellow* (similar to German *j*)
k	similar to English *k*
l	similar to English *l*
m	similar to English *m*
n	similar to English *n*
ŋ	as *ng* in *sing*
o	as in *force*
ɵ	(no English equivalent; similar to German *ö*)

[23] Rashid-ad-Din, *Sbornik Letopisei*. The chronicles of Rashid-ad-Din should not be confused with the much later *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*. The author of the latter work, Muhammad Haidar, named it in honor of Abdur Rashid Khan, ruler of Kashgar, 1533–65.

[24] Rachid-ed-Din, *Djami el-Tévarikh*.

[25] Bartold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 37–48.

[26] Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches*, 1: 192–207.

[27] Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*.

[28] *The Texts and Versions*.

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p similar to English *p*
q (a velar *k*; no English equivalent)
r similar to English *r*
s similar to English *s*
t similar to English *t*
u as *oo* in *book*
v as *w* in *bowie-knife*
y as *u* in *burr*
z similar to English *z*
ь (no English equivalent; a high back unrounded vowel, pronounced as *u* in *rune* but with lips spread instead of rounded.)

In the transliteration of Russian words I have followed the system adopted by the Library of Congress. Turkic and Mongol words taken from the works of other authors I have used in the form in which I found them, except that those given in Russian characters have been transliterated.

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NATURE OF KAZAK SOCIAL GROUPS

Nearly all ethnographic accounts which touch upon the social organization of the Kazak describe them as divided into a number of tribes which are subdivided into sub-tribes or gentes and these again further divided into yet smaller groups.[1] How far this process of subdividing may extend is indicated by Rudenko's study of the Naiman group of Kazak in the foothills of the Altai in which he lists 760 named groups extending, in some cases, through a series of 17 strata of subdivisions.[2]

As a first step in analyzing Kazak social structure it is necessary to consider the nature of the named groups, their relation to one another and the significance of the several orders, or magnitudes, of subdivisions. In such a consideration the problem of terminology immediately intrudes. Any discussion of the subdivisions would seem to involve the application of type names to the various strata and the possibilities are soon exhausted.

In this difficulty recourse might be had to employing the native terminology. In attempting to do so, however, it becomes apparent that many Kazak, and all of those with whom I worked, had but one inclusive term or variations of one term for all the magnitudes of social groupings usually described in the literature as tribes, sub-tribes, gentes and their branches. This term was given by Tlenshiev in Kazak as urƀv. Asfendiarov[3] in Russian writes uru and a few lines later both uru and uruk. Begaliev and Gavrilov do not give urƀv but define ruv[4] as Russian "rod"—race, family, clan, generation; or "plemia"—tribe, race, family. The form urƀq they translate[5] as "family, posterity." Vladimirtsov[6] defines urux or urug in Mongol as "descendant, offshoot of a given gens." In Yakut, according to Serosheveskil,[7] uru means "relationship in general."

My informants agreed that this word or a cognate is the term which is applied in Kazak to all types of social groupings usually understood as tribes, gentes and their subdivisions. Tlenshiev understood the use of the Russian plemia (tribe) as referring to a more inclusive group than rod (gens) but said there were no such distinctions in Kazak. The absence of such terms is confirmed by Asfendiarov who writes:[8]

It is curious that among the Kazak there is only the single indefinite term uru which signifies

[1] See, among others, Levshin, *Description des hordes*, 304; Radlov, *Aus Sibirien*, 1: 514; Dingelstedt, *Le Droit coutumier*, 144; Samoilovich, *Zapretnye Slova*, 162; Kuftin, *Kirgiz-Kazaki*, 8.

[2] Rudenko, *Ocherk Byta . . . Kazakov*, table facing page 334.

[3] *Istoriia Kazakstana*, 100.

[4] *Kazakzko-Russkil Slovar'*, 202.

[5] *Idem*, 252.

[6] *Obshchestvennyl Stroi*, 59.

[7] Serosheveskil, *IAkuty*, 507.

[8] *Idem*, 100.

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61 tribe and sub-tribe, gens and sub-gens . . . . Among the Mongols of the period of Chingis Khan the tribe was designated as irgen, the gens obox and relatives by the word uruk. But among the Kazaks is preserved only the extremely indefinite term uru.

Samoilovich likewise states:[9]

According to Chopaev [his informant] there are no strictly distinct terms in Kazak corresponding to our tribe, clan, generation, etc. One and the same term is applied in different senses. European tribal terminology applied to Kazak is arbitrary and misleading.

It is, however, not unlikely that some Kazak groups had more precise terms to designate the various magnitudes of social groupings. Rudenko, in a very confused statement, says:[10]

The sub-group sök is defined by blood relationship as far as seven ancestors. The gens, ruu, is divided into a series of lines, byr top . . . . Furthermore, sub-groups are indicated by the name of an ancestor and finally divided into sök.

[104] One fact at least is clear from this: the Kazak of the Naiman, Karatai and Karakerei groups with whom Rudenko worked in the region of the Altai had in addition to uru or ruu at least two other words, sök and byr top to designate social groupings based apparently on blood relationship. The occurrence of the word sök in this sense among the Altaian Kazak however is suggestive of influence from other Altaian groups because Potanin reports[11] that the gens among the Altaian Tartars was known as sök. The word is also found in Kazak, as in other Turkic dialects[12] in its primary meaning of "bone" and in Kazak occurs frequently as aq syjek (White Bone) and kara syjek (Black Bone) referring to the nobility and common people respectively. Insofar as the nobility, who were all in theory descended from Chingis Khan, may be considered as forming in themselves a gens, the term syjek might be applied in the sense in which it is used by the Altaians, but such usage was not customary among the Kazak with whom I was acquainted.

The words byr top mentioned by Rudenko mean literally "one group," "one crowd," which might well be used to designate sub-divisions of a gens as he indicates, but I know of no further examples of this except perhaps one parenthetical remark by Grodekov[13] in which he says: "They migrate in groups (tap-tap) of a greater or less number of kibitkas [the felt tent of the nomads]."[14]

Czaplicka, after studying the Russian literature relating to all the Turkic groups of

[9] *Zapretnye Slova*, 162, note 6.

[10] *Ocherk Byta . . . Kazakov*, 59–60.

[11] Potanin, *Ocherki Severo-zapadnoi Mongolii*, 4: 1–2, as cited by Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia*, 54. I have been unable to obtain Potanin's work.

[12] Radlov, *Versuch eines Wörterbuches*, 4: 571.

[13] *Kirgizy i Karakirgizy*, 109–10.

[14] In many accounts the felt tents are called "yurts." I have avoided this use of the word because in some places it meant not the dwelling but the land occupied by a group. (See page 81.)

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expected. In addition to being ideologically weak, from Moscow's viewpoint, it has been criticized for appearing irregularly. And above all, thousands of copies are left unsold.[1] In a word, it does not suit the aims of the Soviet regime, nor does it satisfy the needs of the Kazakhs.

At the beginning of the revival, in the early 1940's, an attempt was made to purify the Kazakh language of Russianisms, or failing that, to apply Kazakh orthographic rules to borrowed Russian words. The leading Kazakh novelist, Mukhtar Auezov, wrote a novel on the life of Abai Kunanbaev, in which he attempted to adapt the spelling of Russian words to the Kazakh language. This adaptation is most important in poetry, because the stress or accent in Kazakh falls only on the last syllable, while in Russian, as in English, it may fall on any syllable. Auezov was severely criticized for this "error" by a philologist who asserted that Abai himself retained Russian words in their original form when there was no Kazakh equivalent. Auezov admitted his errors and agreed to purge from his language Kazakh treatment of Russian words.[2] The whole controversy is specious, for Kazakh orthography had not been standardized in the 19th century, when Abai was composing, and is not standardized today. Abai had no standard orthography to impose upon the Russian, and therefore retained the original. Auezov's Kazakhization of the Russian is not so much a scientific achievement as a cultural expression, an attempt to formulate a Kazakh spelling style as part of a literary program in the context of a revival of traditional Kazakh culture.

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Auezov himself presided over one Kazakh attack on another expression of their culture. In an article, "Considerations on the Novel," Auezov criticized a novel by another Kazakh, Mustafin, for its lack of local dialect terms and colloquialisms, its failure to reflect the folklore and the speech of Kazakh village life. But then he added, "In Mustafin's novel, the new president of the collective farm . . . accomplishes miracles in ten months. All goes as though by the flash of a magic wand . . . One detects here the influence of outmoded traditions of folklore whose heroes easily and carelessly cross over seas of fire, find a way through impassable forests and fly across immeasurable spaces upon the magical bird Zemurg."[3] Auezov cannot have it both ways. He criticizes Mustafin for lack of contact with the people and then attacks him for coming under the influence of "outmoded" folklore traditions.

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Soviet influence has been responsible for several changes in Kazakh literature. The traditional Kazakh mode of literary expression was poetry. The novel did not exist in Kazakhstan until the advent of the Russians. Today there are a number of novelists, such as Mukhtar Auezov and Sabit Mukanov. Both of them started out as poets, and only later adopted the novel as a literary form.

The aim of Soviet writing, in theory, is to achieve "socialist realism." There should be no romanticizing, no formalism or the quest of form for

[1] *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 30 Oct and 12 Nov 53.
[2] *Ibid.*, 3 Sep 52.
[3] Auezov (4), 1951.